Mother Isabel of the Sacred Heart

by Sister Agnes of Jesus

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Foreword

Introduction

Though every child, speaking generally, is born into this world stained with Original sin, we do not speak of the child as personally wicked; nor again after it has been cleansed in the waters of baptism, is it yet called a saint. These terms we are accustomed to reserve till the child has grown to reason and proved itself by its own responsible action, either by following its corrupt nature on the one hand, or by subjecting it to the influences of grace on the other. The course of development taken by each child will, therefore, depend in part upon the interior principle of self-government, but also largely, perhaps more largely, upon environment, upon training. For this reason the devil who rules over the kingdom of this world has his schools of wickedness in which he trains his scholars to evil; and Christ also has His schools of virtue in which His scholars are trained to holiness.

The natural school of sanctity is the Christian home. How many saints have been formed and trained in that school! Examples readily occur to mind. In the Old Testament we have the school initiated by Abraham and carried on through Isaac to the third generation in the person of Jacob, extending over a period of more than 300 years, and embracing many other souls which came under the influence of these holy Patriarchs. In Christian times innumerable instances occur. There is for example the remarkable school of saints founded, as one may say, by Saint Macrina the elder. She trained her son, Saint Basil the elder in holiness. Saint Basil and his wife, Saint Emmelia were blessed with ten children, and they trained them all to

eminent virtue, four of them attaining to the title of saint, viz., Saint Macrina their eldest daughter, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, and Saint Peter of Sebaste.

Besides the natural school of sanctity, the home, our Lord has provided, what we may call, the supernatural school of sanctity - the religious state. Here souls assemble, or are gathered by Christ, for the express purpose of being trained to perfection. When God establishes a new Religious Order or Congregation, He usually raises the founder to heroic sanctity to initiate a sound school or system of training, and to serve as a model for his companions' and successors' imitation. Innumerable instances can be recalled, as Saint Benedict whose training resulted in the heroic sanctity of Saint Maurus, Saint Placid and his sister Saint Flavia, his own sister Saint Scholastica and many others. Another conspicuous example is Saint Ignatius who trained to holiness Saint Francis Xavier, Blessed Peter Claver, Saint Francis Borgia and many others. Or again we may instance the Carmelite Order. Saint Teresa, having been raised to a high degree of perfection, was directed by God to establish a Reform of her Order, and to found Houses to train souls according to the spirit He had given her. We see at once the effect of her teaching and example by the number of scholars she brought to a high degree of virtue. Thus at Valladolid, Saint Teresa led Blessed Beatrice of the Incarnation (Dona Beatriz Onez) to eminent perfection in virtue. At Saint Joseph's in Toledo, we may mention Anna of the Mother of God; at Saint Joseph's convent in Segovia, there is Dona Anna de Xemena and her daughter whom Saint Teresa describes as "eminent servants of God." Indeed, there is scarcely one of the convents that failed to produce three or four or more eminent scholars of holiness, under the wise guidance of their holy mother, and thus, there was established in each convent a tradition and school of sanctity.

On the other hand, where the tradition of a true interior life is allowed to lapse, we see that the succession of holy souls begins to fail. Outwardly, all may be well; the discipline, good; the zeal, unabated; but through the loss of the tradition no real progress is made. After twenty and thirty years in religion souls in such houses may be heard to complain that they are almost where they were at the beginning of their conversion to God. They have unwittingly moved in a vicious circle.

This, we believe, is too often the true explanation why many reforms in more recent times have been without much real fruit. The reform has begun and ended with exterior discipline and observances, and these, however brave a show they may make, have in themselves but little power to effect a true interior reformation of life, without which the exterior appearance of virtue is of little worth. The remedy in all such cases is to take up the thread where it was broken: to go back to the point where outstanding holiness ceased, and to resume the old interior spirit, teaching, and tradition; and doubtless, the fruit of such a course will soon become apparent.

Where the tradition of a real interior life, from which alone holiness proceeds, has been carefully preserved and handed down in a community, a great responsibility rests on the shoulders of each succeeding generation to maintain it intact and to deliver it to those who shall come after them. Thus Saint Teresa finds fault with those who say, if only I lived at the beginning of the foundation, I should have been all right; I too would have become holy. For though it is true that where the teaching is fresh at the fountain-head the prospect of becoming holy is best; "yet we should remember," the Saint goes on to say, "that we also are foundations to those who come after us; and if we who are now living had not fallen away from the fervour of our

predecessors, and if those who succeed us should not do the like, the building would always continue firm and immovable . . . The excuse we make in not belonging to the first beginnings is quite ridiculous, for we consider not the difference there is between our life and virtue, and the life of those saints on whom God bestowed such great favours." That is so; hence the Religious House that maintains the true traditions of an interior life will continue to produce outstanding scholars of holiness.

That the Carmelite convent at Lisieux has been mindful of the warning words of their saintly foundress seems evident from the number of souls this House has trained and continues to train to eminent virtue.! The best known and most popular of these souls is the " Little Flower," as she is commonly called; but there are others besides worthy of notice, as Mother Genevieve of Saint Teresa, Mother Marie-Ange, and the subject of this biographical sketch. It would be as interesting as useful to compare these souls together and consider the points of difference between them, and where they resemble one another. In that way we should see the original elements, the raw material brought to the convent, and the effect of the training to which these souls were subjected, and their gradual transformation into eminent servants of God. But this psychological study would take us too far from our present purpose.

Yvonne Daurelle, in religion Mother Isabel of the Sacred Heart, the subject of this sketch, was endowed by nature with a very loving disposition. Unfortunately the circumstances of her life were not such as would facilitate its development on the best lines. She was early deprived of her mother by death and her father by long absence in China. And though affectionately cared for by an aunt, nothing could quite make up for the loss of her parents and a natural home life. At the age of eleven her home, such as it

was, broke up on her aunt embarking on a second marriage, and Yvonne was sent to school.

All this had an injurious effect on the child's affectionate and sensitive mind. She began to brood and to be filled with melancholy fancies, thinking life to be very long and sad. She was tortured too, with fears that her aunt no longer loved her, and she could find nothing to give relief or comfort.

As might be expected with her loving nature, active imagination, and somewhat loveless childhood, as her mind developed, Yvonne turned with pleasure to reading stories at first of adventure, but later of a kind that gave more play to her affections. "Human love," says her biographer, "became a goal which lifted her out of the petty cares and worries of daily life and made her look forward to the day when she would meet with a heart at one with her own."

Having no object - except of her own creation- whereon to rest her abundant affections, they naturally recoiled upon herself. Yvonne began to think that she was destined to attain to greatness. This condition of mind manifested itself with much simplicity on one occasion when Yvonne answered a question put to the readers of a certain magazine. "Do you think," it asked, "that the world will be destroyed by contact with the comet which is coming?" To this Yvonne replied: "No; the comet will do us no harm for I have a presentiment that my name will become famous, so the world must last long enough for my fame to be established and be made known to the ends of the earth."

At this juncture when Yvonne's young heart seemed to be receding further and further from the Object which alone could fill it, God, as if in compassion, stretched forth His hand, touching her in some secret way, and revealing

Himself to her. To this grace, Yvonne quickly responded. Her heart turned with fervour to God, and under the impulse of devotion she resolved to embrace the religious life.

Though full of excellent purpose, Yvonne was still far from the right path. She fell into the mistake so common with souls in the first fervour of conversion. She formed an exaggerated notion of the value of mortification. "She thought," says her biographer, "She must embrace extraordinary labours and trials, afflict herself day and night, spend long hours in prayer, affect an austere manner," and generally make herself ridiculous and troublesome to those around her.

It was at this time that the Life of the "Little Flower" fell, providentially, into Yvonne's hands, and it made her realize that God called her to walk by the way of love. Now at last Yvonne found her true vocation. Attracted by the "Little Flower" and the lesson of her *Life*, Yvonne decided to enter the Carmelite Order at Lisieux.

It is not our purpose to pursue Yvonne through the difficulties which beset her before she obtained admittance to the convent of her choice, or to trace her subsequent progress in virtue. We wished merely to show the character and so to say, the material with its defects upon which the convent training had to work. Yvonne, undoubtedly, was endowed with an excellent nature, well suited for high spiritual attainment, but through the want of guidance, it had wandered into by-paths which, if pursued, would ultimately have carried her far away from God. How the school of perfection at Lisieux took this young soul, gradually rectified what was amiss, and led her step by step to true and solid virtue, and apparently, to close union with God, is skillfully and pleasantly told in the following pages.

- Father Edward Benedict Weld-Blundell, O.S.B.

Act of Oblation as a Victim of Divine Love Made by Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus

In order that my life may be one act of perfect love I offer myself as a victim of holocaust to Thy Merciful Love, imploring Thee to consume me unceasingly, and to allow the floods of infinite tenderness gathered up in Thee to overflow into my soul, that so I may become a very Martyr of Thy Love, O my God! May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear in Thy Presence, free me from this life at the last, and may my soul take its flight - without delay - into the eternal embrace of Thy Merciful Love! O my Beloved, I desire at every beat of my heart to renew this oblation an infinite number of times, till the shadows retire and everlastingly I can tell Thee my love face to face!

Declaration

Conforming to the Decree of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that in the following pages the word "Saint" and "Miracle" are employed in a purely human sense, and all intention of anticipating the judgment of the Church is utterly disclaimed.

"I am the humble herald of the 'Little Queen.'" - *Sister Isabel of the Sacred Heart*

Long have I known that angel soul
That led my steps to Carmel's goal;
I live the life she lived; I know
And love the cross she bore below,

I take her place and for my share
The cup of gall still standing there.
On me there blows the icy air
That chilled her soul when raised in prayer.
I, too, from earthly joys have flown
To give my love to Christ alone,
That thus untrammelled I might fly
In spirit to the realms on high.
Yet all that I renounced I hold;
Our Lord repays a hundredfold -
For thorns gives roses; though I wait
On earth, I stand by heaven's gate.
- Sister Isabel of the Sacred Heart

Her Life in the Word

When in my heart the newborn flame was lit
Thou claimed'st for Thine own the love that burned:
Thou only Jesus, couldst content my soul
As for a love unlimited it yearned.
- Teresa of the Child Jesus

Yvonne Daurelle - our Mother's name in the world - was born on January 29, 1882, at Epinac (Saone-et-Loire). Her family, were making no settled stay in that part of France and the child was taken from Epinac to Macon, from Macon to Ja Ferte-sous-Jouarre (Seine et Marne) thence to Paris, and finally to Provence, so that in after-times she did not know which to call her home. Sunny Provence was her favourite, with its Alpes Dauphinoises, whose rugged grandeur contrasts with the verdant and charming country. In after-life the remembrance of its beauties untouched as they came from the hand of the Creator, led her to praise more fervently His infinite love for sinful man.

At three years of age, the child lost her mother whose place was taken by her mother's sister. The aunt and her two sons vied in petting the three orphans - for Yvonne had two brothers living; the third had died when he was eighteen months old, soon after his mother's death.

Monsieur Daurelle left Macon with his children and settled in Paris. He always spent Sunday with his sister-in-law, to the delight of his little daughter who was extremely fond of him. However, this pleasure did not last long, as when she was five and a half he went to Tonkin and she only saw him thrice for a month or two at a time before she entered Carmel.

His absence, and the loss of her mother which she felt keenly as she grew older, made a profound impression on the child. High-spirited as she was by nature, she began to brood and give way to melancholy fancies; she thought that "life was long and very sad." None the less, the young philosopher was the life and soul of all the children's games so long as they were boys' sports, such as battles pretending to be savages, boxing with her brothers, and on wet days, toy-soldiers, billiards or cards.

When Yvonne was old enough to begin lessons she found them very tiresome. The school-room seemed a prison, especially on spring days when the blue sky and the birds' songs made her pine for the open air and freedom. She was very intelligent and held her own with the best although she only studied enough to avoid being kept in or given impositions.

At eleven years of age another change took place in her life. Her widowed aunt married Monsieur du Fay and the little girl became a boarder instead of a day-scholar at the school. The affectionate girl, who was greatly attached to her foster-mother, suffered keenly. She was tortured by groundless fears that her aunt would care for her no longer, that she had lost her mother for a second time, and as she was not religious, she could not at first over-come her grief although she was shortly made godmother to the little cousin who became her pet later on.

On May 28, 1893, Yvonne made her first Communion. She felt neither devotion nor fervour, solely the reverential fear in which her religion consisted.

"The words 'Love of God' had no meaning for me," she owned. "I thought it was a figure of speech for adoration. If only I had been taught how good God is and how He loves

us, I am sure that my heart would have responded to His love."

Her lifelong regret at having spent her childhood and early youth in ignorance of divine love aroused her zeal on behalf of children. She longed to write an attractive history of the Saints suited to their understanding and brought out a pamphlet, "The Secret of Happiness for the Little Ones" which has done great good to parents as well as in the nursery. Yvonne spent the greater part of her fourteenth and fifteenth years in Paris. It was there that she came across Lamartine's later "Meditations." Hitherto, though passionately fond of reading, she had confined herself to books suited to her age, preferring tales of adventure which transported her to other countries and peoples, and, although she did not know it, taught her far more than her half-hearted study at school. The volume worked a revolution on her enthusiastic character and ardent, dreamy imagination. Human love dawned upon her, full of charm, like an oasis in the desert. From that time she cared little for the worries of daily life, for she looked forward to full compensation when she met with a heart at one with her own. As she said in after-life: "The embodiment of beauty on which my imagination dwelt was Jesus, the most beautiful among the sons of men. The sympathetic heart which alone could respond to my impulses of affection was the Sacred Heart. The bliss which springs from love for which I longed was that reserved by the Blessed Trinity for its elect."

In fact, the young girl was unsuited for this world's affections and on the rare occasions when she by chance met the heroes of her fancy she felt chilled and disappointed. They no longer pleased her when they ceased to be imaginary. This new phase had unfortunate effects upon her conduct.

"I had been fairly pleasant to live with until now" she told us: "for it was natural to me to dislike what was wrong and to be attracted by what was noble. From that time, the more or less commonplace realities of daily life jarred upon me perpetually, and those around me suffered from my bad temper in consequence. I repaid kindness and attentions with indifference or even with irritability. When old enough to make some return for the devotedness of my adopted mother, I selfishly shut myself up in my room where I indulged in foolish dreams and in reading and writing about frivolous subjects."

From dwelling in this imaginary world, the young girl developed an absurd desire for glory. After her twentieth year, when describing her defects, especially her pride, she wrote: "I always thought that I should be somebody. Apparently she thought so now, judging from her behaviour. She took in a little magazine called Moniteur Litteraire, which asked some questions every month of its young readers and published the best answers. To the query: "Do you think that, as some astronomers declare, the world will be destroyed by contact with the comet which is coming?" Yvonne sent the astounding reply: "No; the comet will do us no harm, for I have a presentiment that my name will become famous, so the world must last long enough for my fame to be established and to be made known to the ends of the earth."

Later on, after having read Francois Coppee's *La bonne Souffrance*, she had the audacity to forward to the author an original drama in verse with a letter, in which she said: "I wish to be the writer for whom you long, who, like a second Chateaubriand, is to revive French literature." Of course what appeared extraordinary self-conceit was in reality rather simplicity than pride.

Yvonne disliked living in town: Paris, with its heat, its dust, and its feverish excitement seemed to her an "image of hell." She delighted in the country, far from the gaiety of towns, although she would have been admired, for she was pretty and very good style. She liked to be well dressed without being coquettish or studied. When people spoke of the want of modesty in the fashions of to-day, she was glad to be able to say to herself: "I never wore a low-necked dress." The theatre was the only thing that made her regret town, but she consoled herself with her books.

She was now nearly seventeen, and her mind, too serious to satisfy itself with frivolous reading, turned to more solid matter.

"It did not make me better or draw me nearer God," she averred; "but my dreams became less sentimental and I sometimes tried to fathom the great mysteries of eternity."

At this period in her life, God enlightened her with His preventing grace. On March 7, 1899, at Noves, in Provence, Yvonne, after having read the chapter on enthusiasm in *L'Allemagne*, by the Protestant authoress Madame de Stael, was strolling about the garden. It was five o'clock, and while watching the splendid sunset, she meditated unmoved upon the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity. Untouched by love, she strove to picture to herself the existence of the Three in One, when suddenly she stopped: her heart felt the divine contact: earth and time seemed nothing to her any longer - her soul was filled with esteem, love, and longing for heavenly things.

"I have never lost that longing," she wrote just before she died: "God has implanted it in my heart like a dagger, cruel yet rapture giving, at once my torment and my comfort: it

acts as a spur to goad me on in the spiritual life that I may swiftly reach the goal of my desires."

The influence of the grace of her conversion was permanent: at nineteen the young girl felt that she had a religious vocation, and later on, that it was for Carmel. She had become very devout and communicated several times a week; all her natural ardour was centred on God.

Her director, a venerable Jesuit Father, was so impressed by the marvels worked in her soul that, at a meeting of the children of Mary from which she was absent, he compared the fervour of her love to that of Saint Teresa.

The devil, jealous of the truth which brings peace and liberty to souls, made a fresh effort. Yvonne eagerly read Saint Teresa's works, misunderstood them, and became, to use her own expression, "a thorough bigot." Melancholy and unendurable in society, she was constantly haunted by the words: "No one can become a saint without undergoing great labours and trials." She sought these extraordinary "labours and trials" by rashly inventing ways of torturing herself night and day, besides which she spent long hours in prayer, never spoke an unnecessary word, affected an austere manner, and when she was justly criticized and taxed with exaggeration and her behaviour was laughed at, instead of changing people's opinion by acting with simplicity, obedience, and self-forgetfulness, she offered it to God as a "great trial," found at last and endured for love of Him.

Under this mistaken idea, she wished to quit the world at once, and when her relations declared that if she left them before she came of age the police would be sent after her, she gave way to despair. How she thanked God, later on, for the delay over which she had grieved so bitterly!

At the end of 1901, Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus came to her aid. Yvonne cried as she read her life and resolved on taking her as her guide and model, offering herself as she had done as a holocaust to all-merciful Love, and declaring with her: "I, too, have found my vocation - my vocation is love!"

Henceforth the Carmel of Lisieux was her promised land in which she wished to live and die; it shone, in her imagination, like another Thabor. There would she set up her tent in her earthly exile; there would she taste the sweets of voluntary poverty so long desired.

"Poverty," she wrote some time later, "freed me from the superfluous possessions which troubled and depressed mo. I loved Jesus and felt ill at ease amid the comfort that surrounded me: love wants to resemble the beloved, and I longed to live like Him 1 loved, so that having shared His earthly lot I might share His lot in heaven too. Above all, 1 hoped that after learning by experience what was His exterior life as a poor artisan, I should have a deeper and more intimate knowledge of His interior life."

As the young girl expected to meet with difficulties and complications about entering Carmel, she asked her director to manage the matter. In spite of her entreaties he would not press it, and waited until she was almost twenty-one before writing to us. His letter praised the postulant so highly that we felt very little misgiving about her delicate health. We had decided upon receiving her after Easter, when Monseigneur Amette, then Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux, visited us on his way to Avignon and expressed a wish to see her. In spite of difficulties, she resolved to call on him. On reaching the Archbishop's palace she found the principal door opened for the entrance of an episcopal carriage. She took the opportunity of looking in and saw several

ecclesiastics standing on the threshold. One of them turned towards her and beckoning her, said: "This young lady has come to see me. I recognized you from your portrait," added Monseigneur, as he drew her into the palace. The result of the interview was that Yvonne's reception was postponed indefinitely on account of her family's opposition.

The poor girl returned to Noves in despair. Feeling that the disappointment was undermining her health, she wrote to us towards the end of the year, begging us to receive her as she would die of grief if she waited much longer.

We suggested that she should make a three days' retreat with our out-sisters. She received the letter on the fourth of January and started for Lisieux next day. Her aunt accompanied her as far as Avignon where they parted in tears, realising that their separation would be final. The fervent postulant called at the convent on the eighth of January, and made a most favourable impression on us. Her perfect breeding was evident. Her letters and the clever society in which she had lived had made us fear that she would be proud and supercilious, but we were pleasantly surprised at finding her the very opposite.

Her extreme frankness almost cost her her Carmelite vocation. From a remark dropped by a doctor who did not know that she was fretting because she could not become a Carmelite, she thought she was neurasthenic and told us so in all simplicity. We at once took alarm. It seemed useless for her to make a retreat outside and we advised her to apply to the Visitation community at Caen, telling her that it would be rash to embrace so austere a rule as ours. She wept bitterly and departed broken-hearted. However, her frankness brought her back to Lisieux the same evening. She had said to the Superior: "Reverend Mother, I dislike both your Order, Saint Francis de Sales, and Saint Jane

Chantel, but I have determined to overcome my aversion for them if it is the will of God."

The situation was difficult, for although exceedingly sorry for the poor girl, we had decided upon sending her back to her family. Next day, she made her first and last pilgrimage to the grave of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus, begging her protectress to help her. She felt as despairing as ever, but paid a visit on her return to Monsieur Guerin, Sister Teresa's uncle, who became much interested in her. He took her to see a doctor next day and on being assured that she was not neurasthenic and that her health offered no obstacle to her becoming a Carmelite, he pleaded her cause with us warmly.

Yvonne was very joyful when she parted with Monsieur Guerin. She was reminded of a like episode in the life of Sister Teresa. "For three days," Yvonne said, "I was plunged in the deepest gloom, but on the third day I left her uncle as she did, in the hope of being received at Carmel, and the sky, which had wept for three days, was cloudless."

Her Life at Carmel

"Our Lord's yoke is easy and light; when we accept it, it becomes sweet at once." - *Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus*

Who was it lightend up the darksome road
Like gleaming star with kindly, guiding light
That led me to the crib where lay my Spouse?
Were not the Magi gladdened at the sight?
Thou, O Teresa, wert my star that night!
- Sister Isabel of the Sacred Heart

The happy postulant entered Carmel on January 13, 1904, under the name and protection of Isabel of the Sacred Heart, a young sister of Cardinal Amette's who had died a holy death in 1883, in a Dominican Convent.

We soon discovered an attraction for prayer and for regular observance in Sister Isabel of the Sacred Heart, but she was less satisfactory as regards manual labour, and until she left the noviceship she seemed to do little that was well done or useful. Incessant complaints were made about her slowness, and the postulant often felt that not only the Mother Prioress, but the sisters too, would frequently have had the right to blame her. In fact she might with reason have looked upon herself in the Community as a useless wheel whose loss in a machine would not be missed.

She recognized afterwards that God was leading her in the way she needed, as is seen in her long poem "Spiritual Childhood" in which she describes the graces which, unknown to herself, were acquired by the frequent humiliations of the first years of her religious life.

Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus begins by addressing a "little soul,"

Encircled by the mists and stifling shade
Within the valley stands the Mount of Love;
There must the soul descend until 'tis called
To rise above.

Like some fair floweret blooming 'mid the fields,
Whose beauty to all human sight is lost;
The sun is hidden, while from God come down
The rain and frost.

But when deep in the earth its roots have struck
And in the heart humility now reigns,
The sun shines forth and from its rays the soul
All joys attains.

The Little Soul

"'Twas thus that Jesus treated me at first;
Humiliations came from every side,
Blame and disdain o'erwhelmed my fainting soul,
Yet these hard lessons made a prudent guide:
I realised how deep my misery,
How none but God is rich, with power supreme,
And in His love alone I place my hope
For all my works as things of naught I deem.

The "hard lessons" mentioned by the "little soul" were mostly given by Mere Marie-Ange.

The latter had just been professed when Sister Isabel of the Sacred Heart joined her in the novitiate and she became her "angel", a nun who is charged with teaching postulants the customs of the religious life, and knowing her worth, we told her to reprimand her companion whenever she thought well.

Sister Isabel felt deeply humiliated at being corrected by a young religious only a year older than herself One day, when asked how she got on with Sister Marie-Ange, the postulant answered: "She annoys me with her lectures; I know what she tells me quite as well as she does." "Well, if you know it, why don't you do it?" was the reply. She could only confess that her perfection consisted more in theory than in practice and went away rebuffed and resolved to do better in future.

Another "hard lesson" lay in her ceaseless struggle against a violent dislike for her vocation which took the place, as soon as she came to Lisieux, of the strong attraction that had sustained her during the three years delay in the world. Formerly she had enjoyed spiritual sweetness and consolations but she was now deprived of them. She had to contend as well with too strong a natural affection for the Mother Prioress, so that all was gloom for her within and without.

As she seemed sad at times and so absent-minded as to be very forgetful, we feared lest hers might be one of those dreamy, melancholy characters for which our Mother, Saint Teresa, had no mercy.

After a graver lapse of memory than usual it was thought well to tell her that she was better suited to the active life and that she must make up her mind to leave us. Never shall we forget the expression of her face; her tears and silent grief together with her candid avowal of her dislike to the life completely reassured us. However, her postulancy was lengthened to eight months and October 15 was fixed on for her clothing. The poor girl had to endure a longer delay as unexpected difficulties deferred the ceremony until January 21, 1905, against the wish of us all.

Though she was forced to wait until January 21 to wear the Carmelite habit, her soul was clothed with the peace and joy of Carmel's daughters from October 15. From that day her violent repugnance gave way to calmness and even joy, and in spite of her trials, this joy increased as long as she lived.

While still a postulant, she was brought to own, after having been blamed for a fault, that she had been mistaken in thinking she had a grand soul, for that in reality her soul was petty and very weak. The poor girl had come to us full of noble aspirations; she asked for sufferings and dreamt of martyrdom. She had expected to suffer in observing our Rule on account of her delicate health, in which she was evidently not mistaken, yet in spite of her ardent desires of mortification she found it difficult to make the little sacrifices of giving up her will and the thousand other petty trials to be found in the religious life. Her failures taught her self knowledge and henceforth she owned that her soul was "paltry" and very weak.

Her novitiate was fervent and outwardly differed little from her postulancy. She was aid in the linen room and refectory and had other duties which caused her to spend the greater part of her time in sweeping and dusting. She led a truly hidden life, gaining a deeper knowledge of her own nothingness and so drawing nearer to God Who sought her wholly for Himself.

A fresh delay postponed the date of her profession until March 19, instead of February 2, as she had hoped. Later, she became devoted to Saint Joseph and she was glad that she had taken her vows on his feast, but at the time she was deeply grieved at not consecrating herself to God on the day our Lady offered the Infant Jesus in the temple.

She possessed the deepest possible devotion to our Lady to whom she had given herself entirely some years before, after reading the *Traite de la vraie devotion a la Saints Vierge* by Blessed Grignon de Montfort. The book had done her so much good that she used to give it to her novices in the hope that it would profit them in the same way. She composed the following little prayer which she was fond of repeating as a renewal of her offering.

"Beloved Mother, I renounce self and give myself body and soul to thee for time and for eternity; lead me to Jesus and may all that is mine pass through thy hands to Him."

On her profession day Yvonne felt no sensible consolation, but, like her saintly model, Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus, she was "inundated by a flood of peace." The sky was cloudless and the sun shone brightly on that day and to the newly-professed nun, nature seemed keeping high festival. Four days later the veil was given her by Monseigneur Amette, afterwards Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, who always retained a fatherly interest in her. All her family were present on this occasion.

Her profession retreat, like that of her clothing, was spent in aridity, but she cared little for that; in fact she was glad to give rather than to receive and often repeated Sister Teresa's verses which urged her to be generous:

'Twas love that made of Thee an exile here,
Jesus my God, Victim of love for me!
Then take the cycle of my life as Thine,
For I would suffer, I would die for Thee!

After having given herself entirely to our Lord, the novice strove more earnestly than ever to follow in the steps of the angel of our Carmel. It was strange that though, while in the

world, Yvonne felt her presence near her constantly and an affection for her which often made her weep, yet it ceased directly she entered the convent. Still, she lived in the spirit of her patroness, whose example was continually held up to her and whose counsels were heard; it was also owing to her that the young nun's life as a Carmelite was offered specially for priests.

Among her notes (which were never written except under obedience) is the following:

"I came to Carmel, like little Teresa, chiefly with the intention of sacrificing myself for priests, realising how God must delight in the soul of a priest and its immense influence over the salvation and sanctification of other souls. I have always kept this object of my religious life in view and I feel confident that after 1 die, I shall be able to help priests specially; I will make my dear Saint known to them and induce them to follow in her steps."

As regards herself, her efforts were centred on entering the short, unfailing road that soon attains to heaven. She practised the simple, continual self-denial and abnegation that characterized Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus.

"I have always been careful whenever I felt a slight attachment to anything to mortify myself at once. For instance, I always liked my linen to be scrupulously clean, and as I noticed that I was annoyed when for any reason I received it less often, I realized that I cared too much about it. I therefore took means of changing it less frequently and soon became indifferent in the matter, except as regards neatness and reverence. I felt strongly that little things of that kind can hinder perfect divine union.

"Saint John of the Cross best taught me this doctrine of detachment which was that of our "little Teresa." He helped me in every way to understand her and clearly proved to me that divine union can only be obtained by faith and self-denial. He also gave me a love for the common way and made me distrust what was singular, for which a mistaken interpretation of Saint Teresa's words had given me an attraction. But it was she who revealed to me what intense love His creatures can feel for the good God and made me long to possess such love myself."

Sister Isabel says of the mortification she practised:

"I want to describe how the Master has made me find joy in the cross.

"After my profession, following the advice that had been given me, I hastened to the "bleeding Flower of Calvary " and plucked it continually with the cross for its stem. This cross was the daily, perpetual mortification of our austere life: austere indeed for one who refuses nothing to the good God and who is perfectly faithful to the Rule and duty. I no longer sought for imaginary crosses and dreamt of them no more, and as I received each day the grace to bear my daily cross, I carried it cheerfully, finding by experience that the first step is the hardest, and that the generous acceptance of a light cross brings with it a deep peace which gives strength for greater and harder mortifications.

"Fasting tried me very much: I found it very hard to work in the morning on fast-days, as 1 was obliged to do for several years while I had sole charge of the refectory and swept and dusted it. The weight of the Breviary at Matins gave me a back-ache which was so increased by the weight of our mantle on feast days that as a rule, my prayer only consisted in offering to God my poor back, which occupied

all my thoughts. When, later on, I was forbidden to perform, the penance of the Rule in such matters as fasting, want of sleep, and other things, illness supplied their place. I was very glad, as, had it been left to me, I should have preferred, except in certain moments of temptation, to take no care of my health and to keep my Rule exactly."

Her confidences about exterior and interior mortification are of a more recent date.

"Although acting with simplicity, I liked to offer our Lord sufferings which were unknown to others. For several weeks one winter I used to be attacked every evening with a raging toothache. I was glad to give it to God in secret, but I thought it better to tell Mere Marie-Ange who was then prioress, as to soothe the pain which was caused by the cold I was obliged to sleep in my clothes and feared it would be against obedience to do so without permission.

"God made me understand the vanity of continually asking advice of superiors. Nature loves it, for it soothes pride to be noticed. I took an opposite course, and as soon as the elections of 1909 were over, I arranged with our Mother (who agreed to allow me to follow my own way) that my sole direction should be to ask her advice in case I needed it. I grew in detachment and self-contempt. When I received light of which I should have liked to speak or when my soul was troubled and I wanted to complain, I said to myself: 'Say nothing: our mother has light enough; she does not need mine; she hears enough about suffering and temptations; I will not weary her with mine.' Then I thanked God for His graces and allowed my pains and temptation to be forgotten".

A few months after Sister Isabel of the Sacred Heart was professed, Mere Marie-Ange, who was still in the novitiate,

fell seriously ill. We knew that our little Sister Isabel possessed strong good qualities and suspected that her virtue was exceptional, for the hidden violet is discovered by its scent. From that time we let her see that we trusted her, but she still descended lower and lower into the "fertile valley of humility;" she was glad to "live unknown and be made of no account". She no longer dreamt of becoming "somebody" and only cared to become a saint and make one of the legion of little souls' for which Sister Teresa asked our Lord. Her soul was transformed and all things appeared to her in new light. "It seemed as though scales had fallen from my eyes", she said. Her behaviour to her family in the past caused her the deepest regret. She was heart-broken at the thought of what they had suffered from her mistaken piety, her want of real self-denial and her selfish lack of consideration. She never ceased to grieve over it as long as she lived but comforted herself by trusting that God would allow her to make full amends to them in heaven.

The year 1908 was a trying one for her in every way. Her health, which had appeared excellent before her profession, seemed now to be seriously affected and we were obliged to take care of her during the summer.

She told us how, without using any deception, she had managed to appear strong and well before taking her vows.

"I entered Carmel resolved to act upon the principle which I interpreted too literally, of working as long as my strength lasted before owning that I was tired. Thinking that it was wrong to complain of anything but severe illness, from the first I made it a rule to take no notice of any discomfort or weariness but to answer almost invariably when questioned about ray health: "I am quite well." Consequently, I was spared no hardships and was not allowed to indulge in what appeared to be whims in respect to food and clothes. In this

way I offered many a "hidden flower and little sacrifice" to Jesus, but so unsuspected were they that Mere Marie-Ange, who was also in the novitiate but who was given a certain amount of authority over me, went so far as to say: "I must scold and try you, or with such good health as yours there would be nothing to suffer!"

During 1908, interior sufferings were added to her bodily pains: she felt a disgust for everything, and absolute dryness; the heavens seemed like lead. Added to this, the devil appeared permitted to torture her, for she lived in the midst of perpetual terrors, with an especial fear of evil spirits and thunderstorms. The smallest cloud in the sky had such an effect on her that she had to go indoors, and when no cloud could be seen, she was uneasy about the storm that might break next day. She was delivered from the latter trial by persevering and trustful prayer to Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus.

Her fear of seeing the evil one inspired these lines:

One night I feared a visit from the fiend,
But suddenly I lost all sense of dread
As flashed across my mind "The hour is come" -
The words before His death the Saviour said -
"The prince of this world cometh, but in Me
He hath not anything," declared our Lord.
Nor hath he aught in me, since all my sins
Are pardoned and my soul to grace restored.
With all my miseries and ignorance,
Grieving I offer them again to Thee,
With all that gives the devil power to harm -
Oh! let me never his dire vision see I

This poor girl had suffered from a timidity from earliest childhood which seems to have culminated in a kind of

martyrdom during this year. She declared later on that her greatest sufferings came from her imagination, although she had had very severe and real pain to bear. She sympathised deeply with others like herself and told us playfully that when she was in heaven she should feel great pity for cowards and should do her best to help them - in fact she would be quite willing to become their patroness although the title would not do her much honour.

When, shortly after she left the novitiate, an affection of her knee was cured by our little saint, she seemed to enter upon a new phase. So far she had only been a very fervent nun walking dutifully in the road traced for her, but henceforth we venture to say that she initiated, marching boldly forward, exploring the horizon, eager for light and convinced that God intended to bestow fresh light upon her. She resembled some splendid butterfly which leaves its chrysalis, and spreads its wings, soaring far above the beaten track of men.

But before, she could say, like her sister in heaven:

'I know Thy secrets, for I am Thy bride,' hell delivered a violent assault upon her.

"For some days," she wrote, "I have undergone a singular trial during which my will, calm and at peace, has witnessed a violent onslaught delivered against my soul by the demon of pride. It reminded me of the war between the good and bad angels: an accursed voice exclaimed within my heart 'I would rather possess nothing than possess all from God: rather would I be annihilated than receive beatitude and eternal glory as an alms given out of compassion.'

"I clung by my will close to Him I loved, anxiously awaiting the end of the battle without feeling the blows, resisting

without effort; indeed I even smiled at the furious attack, anticipating that it was the fore-runner of great graces, in which hope I was not mistaken. In a short time I found myself united to God in a way new to me and the words of our Lord to Saint Teresa when He raised her to the spiritual nuptials perpetually recurred to me: "Show zeal for My honour like a true bride." A zeal for souls and a longing to spend myself for my divine Bridegroom consumed my heart."

Mother Isabel describes as follows the grace of union which came after her trial:

"During prayer on the evening of the third day I entered the interior of my soul, and seemed to descend into the giddy depths of an abyss where I had the impression of being surrounded by limitless space. Then I felt the presence of the Blessed Trinity, realizing my own nothingness, which I understood better than ever before, and the knowledge was very sweet. The divine Immensity in which I was plunged and which filled me had the same sweetness. My joy at seeing my own nothingness equalled my indignation at it during those three days.

"This grace gradually grew weaker, but lasted for a long while. For many months I never opened a book during prayer; it was enough for me to descend into the abyss. My soul resembled a tiny shell floating peaceful and solitary, upon a shoreless ocean. What a joy it was! Now I often say to myself: 'let me descend!' but the scene is changed: I can no longer find the deep abyss nor the infinite space around me - The good God has come to the surface!"

Some time afterwards she wrote:

"The light which has filled my soul since I entered the "Little Way" has not come from books but from the Holy Ghost, although I have had neither ecstasies nor visions. My prayer time always passed either in dryness and in struggling against distractions, in trying to forget the pains in my stomach, or in keeping my mind at rest in the presence of God Whom I felt within my heart. I think that the latter was a form of prayer of quiet, an obscure contemplation in which, as with our saint, "the Master instructed me without the sound of words." I felt with delight that He was beautifying my soul. I was like a flower endowed with consciousness and able to love and enjoy the sun which had made it bloom and given it colour.

"Without seeing anything with the eyes either of the body or the soul I realized that God was present, I felt His gaze bent on me full of gentleness and affection, and that He smiled kindly upon me. I seemed plunged in God.

"My imagination was submissive and did not act. I did not hear any noise that might be going on around me. My soul looked fixedly into the gaze invisibly bent on me and my heart repeated untiringly "My God, I love Thee!" While reiterating it with obscure but deep joy, I longed that the divine gaze, the spiritual Sun, should cause the virtues to flourish in my soul, and was conscious that my longing was granted and that this profound peace and simple act of love concealed an incomprehensible activity. Sometimes, remembering that our Mother, Saint Teresa, said that when we feel we are so near the King we should make our petitions to Him, I used to plead for souls; but as a rule I did not pause for that, being convinced that to repeat 'My God, I love Thee!' pleased Him better and included all the rest."

There were times more favourable for making her petitions. During her illness in 1911 she wrote:

"My desires are infinite. . . I have often made them known: firstly, the salvation of souls, of all the souls now on earth and of those which will exist until the end of the world; then that divine love may reign in every soul; that those consecrated to God, especially priests, may reach the height of sanctity to which their vocation calls them; to obtain baptism for infants; that Purgatory may free its captives and may be closed for ever by souls being taught how to fly straight to heaven on leaving this world; that physical and bodily pain may be consoled, soothed, and to a great extent abolished. Yet these desires, like Saint Teresa's, become very grievous when I reflect that Jesus Himself could not obtain the salvation of all souls, nor make Himself loved by all, nor save them all from the tortures of Purgatory or from Limbo. I am troubled by the profound mystery of God's will being frustrated in His wishes by the contrary designs of His creatures, and I pray: "Father, since this is so, I entreat Thee to grant as far as possible the longings of the Heart of Jesus, for all His desires are mine," and this brings me peace.

"This was, for a long time, my only way of hearing Mass. When the sacred Host was upraised after the words of Consecration, I used to say: "Father, behold Thy beloved Son in Whom Thou has set all Thy pleasure; hear Him!" This "Hear Him!" which expressed all my longings, meant: "Grant all He asks; realise all His desires!"

Sister Isabel wrote during the same year.

"The words of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus: 'It is true that I shall see God in heaven, but I am with Him quite as much on earth as I shall be there' made me aspire higher, I thought that this was not a private conviction of our saint, but that she was announcing, with striking lucidity, a mystery of love which perhaps no one had ever ventured to believe or proclaim before. I, in my turn, believed this mystery; I

believed that God, being Almighty, can give Himself in this world to His creature as He does in heaven. I believed that I might hope for this privilege myself, and I have enjoyed it and enjoy it still in very truth. I do indeed believe that God has granted me to love Him and to be as united to Him here in as high a degree as I shall love and be united with Him in heaven, although in a mysterious and unconscious manner.

"This light produced fresh light. My love for God made me long to be God so that I might bestow the Divinity on Him and sink into nothingness. This impulse of my heart coming from such a poor finite, miserable, little creature like myself taught me that He, Who is generosity itself, could not show less generosity than mine for Him 1 love, and I concluded that the words of the Holy Spirit: "You are Gods," should be taken literally. Yes; God will make us like Himself; He will communicate to us all of His being that can be communicated; He will, so to say, put His Divinity at our feet and "will serve us" as Jesus said. For God is infinitely humble, which is to me His dearest attribute. He will be glad to do this for His insignificant little creatures, for love naturally abases itself before the beloved, but this abasement will not lessen His glory.

"Our Teresa preferred love to all the other divine attributes; to her, love was seen in all the rest of God's perfections. 1 feel sure that she meant by this, that Love, if I may venture to say so, is more than a divine attribute: Love is God Himself, since Saint John said "God is love". Therefore, if God and Love are one, it is not difficult to prove that we can expect nothing from God but gentleness, affection, mercy, devotion, kindness, and compassion; we may feel sure that we have naught to fear from His severity or His justice unless we commit the sin against the Holy Ghost which cannot be forgiven, and that sin is to despise and reject Love. The faithful children of God should never harbour a

dread of divine chastisement and judgment, which are only meant for those who are His enemies.

"After all these beautiful thoughts," the humble nun writes, "I am as weak and as miserable as possible; I lament about nothing and almost fall into despair about some trifle, which convinces me that the light comes from above and that if the Saviour abandoned me for an instant I should sink into vice and be lost eternally. When I feel on the edge of the abyss and dread lest I should become dizzy, I say the prayer of Blessed Margaret-Mary: 'O loving Heart! I put all my trust in Thee for I fear all from my weakness, but I hope all from Thy mercy!' and after this act of confidence I am completely reassured."

To return to Sister Isabel's religious life. At the elections in November, 1909, after the death of Mere Marie-Ange, she was made Sub-Prioress at the age of twenty-seven. The community knew little of her, although she had been asked to read to the novices and to correct their exterior faults. She had been second portress and had helped with the correspondence. Strange to say, in spite of the literary talent she developed later on. Sister Isabel was at a discount here at first as in all else.

Soon after being put into her new office, she was made mistress of novices. She treated those in her charge with great simplicity. She ruled them with "compassion and love" but would not allow them to seek her direction for their personal pleasure. "You came to Carmel to find God," she used to say; "Seek Him in solitude of heart where alone He can be found." She told other novices who persisted in remaining near her under the pretext of wanting light: "Light is given to obedient souls: go back to your cell where it is awaiting you."

"I often made my novices bear the cross," she told us, "especially what is most sanctifying in the cross, that is, what brings disgrace rather than physical pain, for what mortifies the mind and the heart is far more meritorious than bodily mortification. I also required the latter from them sometimes, such as bearing without complaint whatever discomfort we feel, as our Mothers did in former times and as our little saint constantly used to do; I mean such things as cold, heat, ill-cooked food, ill-fitting clothes, suffering in silence annoyances not injurious to health. As for instruments of penance, with the exception of the disciplines ordered by the Constitutions, I was afraid they might be instruments of vanity for the novices as I found that they used to preoccupy my own mind and prevent my fixing my thoughts on God. It is plain to me that, our life being one of constant mortification, we do better, except in the case of a special call from God, to expend our fervour in fulfilling the Rule, which is the expression of the divine will and includes all the suffering needed for our higher sanctification, instead of performing acts of supererogation which often come from self-will."

In her poem on "Spiritual Childhood," she makes Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus say:

The limit of our love is that our love
Be limitless; yet we must be discreet
Lest nature lead us to commit excess
In self-denial.
Christ's will it is alone that immolates -
To follow that is holocaust complete....

And again:

He said: "Take up thy cross "! 'Tis then by this,
By taking up we find it: 'tis concealed

In virtue, victory of the tempted soul,
And ill repealed.

The cross is in our work, the pains of life.
In all the griefs, the wounds that crush the heart;
In loss of friends, in illness and in tears
It has its part.

Unseen, it hides within the kindly act
Man shows to man, the deed that costs him dear;
In gentleness, in peace within the home,
The cross is here.

Even in charity the cross is found
By the soul languishing for God, its Joy,
Which holds all bitter save its Good supreme
Without alloy.

Sister Isabel wrote to a novice:

"Never cease to mortify yourself in every way as long as you live." These words of our Mother, Saint Teresa, have sounded in my ears during the whole of my religious life, but particularly during my novitiate. If we continually mortify ourselves, the bitterness of the cross becomes sweet and we find more consolation in sacrifice than in consolation itself. Let your love for sacrifice and the cross be vehement, and the cross will once more be the instrument of your salvation."

She told another novice who was frightened by the words of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus: "The more we wish to be given up to love, the more must we be given over to suffering."

"To be given over to suffering " means to submit ourselves as readily as the victim in the hands of the priest to the petty

mortifications which occur continually in the religious life or in the life of perfect Christians in the world. To be given over to suffering is to be perfectly faithful and vigilant in the practice of virtue."

"There are people (do not be of their number) who understand these words in quite another sense: for them it is a tragic warning: 'Be wary of what you wish for: you long to be given up to love. Take care; God is watching you, and as soon as you are given up to Him you will be tortured.' If our saint had meant this, she would have contradicted her own teaching which she could have no longer maintained. She, who ceaselessly called 'little souls' to the love of the good God, who describes their heavenly Father as being as tender and compassionate as a mother, would have suddenly changed her tone and told them that God is a tyrant and that those who abandon themselves to Him can expect from Him nothing but suffering! . . . No doubt this must have been the idea of the Carmelite nun at X---- did not dare to offer herself to the merciful love of God lest the spiritual troubles from which she always suffered severely should become unbearable. After struggling with herself for a long while, she at last made the offering in fear and trembling. What was her surprise at finding herself filled at once with unspeakable grace and completely delivered from all her former sufferings!" The shrewd novice-mistress soon discovered when any zealous project was exaggerated, and said to a newly professed nun who wished to offer her life for the salvation of religious.

"What a fruitful illusion! 'Fruitful' in the sense that it would furnish you with countless dreams that would come to nothing. You must be more simple and humble: offer to the heavenly Father, Jesus, the great, the divine Victim, Whose sacrifice suffices for all and for everything, and could purchase a million worlds and more as well."

She wrote to another:

"The good God is powerful enough to grant us all the graces we ask of Him without any need of our offering Him compensations, as, for instance that we should ask for desolations for ourselves in order that others may be consoled. The Master is kind and merciful enough to console all of us. Confidence in His liberality honours Him far more than petty bargaining." She was not fond of self-examination; one of her novices kept this note from her:

"Meditate on Teresa's words: "When charity entered my heart I felt that I must forget self, And henceforth I was happy."

"All your troubles and discouragement comes from thinking too much of self, of your virtue, your sanctity, and the beauty of your soul. From the spiritual point of view, you are a little coquette who cares too much for dress. Believe me, the best way is to forget self: that is the secret of happiness."

She tells us how she discerned whether a soul was walking by the "little way:"

"It seems to me that the touchstone by which we can discover unmistakeably whether a soul is walking by the 'little way,' is to inquire into its feelings of joy or sadness regarding its imperfections and falls. If it owns that it is saddened and discouraged by interior humiliation, I think it has only started on 'the way,' but if the sight of its misery gives it peace and joy, and it prizes its own powerlessness above all treasures, because it relies for its sanctity on earth and its glory in heaven solely on divine mercy, then I think it is well on 'the way.'

"This seems to me the essential point in our little saint's teaching and when this is established, light about details comes by degrees. But the joy felt at the sight of our own weakness of which I speak is not a joy which we can force ourselves to feel; it does not come from outside hut from the depths of our being; it is independent of the will, and springs from the inmost recesses of our heart, embracing even the inferior and sensitive part of the soul. Its source is the Holy Ghost, which explains all.

"Then, is this joy a grace? Certainly it is, but though it cannot be acquired by our own efforts, it can be obtained by prayer. However, the effort we make to face our own miseries cheerfully appeals to divine love; as Sister Teresa says in her charming way, we have mounted a stair or two and Jesus comes down and, like a lift, takes the soul and raises it to the summit of the 'little way' which is so simple yet so grand in its love and truth."

One day she told a novice that she could not become a saint in a day; the latter answered, "Mother, you are contradicting the words of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus, for she said: 'God does not need time to perfect His work of love in a soul. One ray from His Heart suffices to bring the flower into bloom for all eternity.'"

Although it is rather long, we print entire the well-judged answer given by the young, novice-mistress:

"It would be a mistake to interpret these words literally. The speaker was thinking of herself - a saint already, a blossom not yet opened, but a marvellous bud only awaiting a ray from the divine Sun to blossom into beauty. She did not state that one ray from the Heart of Jesus could make a branch, with neither stalk nor bud, bear a flower. She was speaking of a flower which only needed opening. If we

compare perfect sanctity to a flower, we must liken souls entering the spiritual life to a green stem in which the sap is mounting but whose blossom is only in prospect, the germ being hidden within a small twig. The little plant must have been watered many a time and the sun have risen and set again and again before the flower will appear.

"In the first ages of the world God took centuries in completing His work of sanctification in souls. Later on, He shortened the life of man, yet we hear of holy hermits, hidden in the desert from their childhood, who practised heroic virtues until extreme old age. In our days God seems in greater haste to fulfill our longing to see Him face to face and by raising a galaxy of young saints to the Altar proves that He can accomplish His work of sanctification in a few years. But, at least, let us leave Him these few years which are almost indispensable if we are to make any personal effort towards it. True, He is free to sanctify a soul without any co-operation of its own, to raise an innocent being to the highest ranks of heaven, bestowing on it greater glory and love than on souls which have worked long for Him on earth, yet, considering that God likes to see us work humbly and trustingly together with Him, I doubt whether He actually does what we cannot deny in theory that He might do. Surely He would prefer the company in heaven of a soul that had lived in intimacy with Him through contemplating the mysteries of His mortal life - of one which had loved Him in prosperity and misfortune, which had worked for Him by helping Him to save souls and which had striven through the cloud of faith to know and love Him as in the Beatific Vision. Would He not take greater pleasure in this soul, whose loving trust depended on Him to raise it to sanctity, than He would in the soul of an infant who died after having been baptized, so that He could not recall to its mind any such reminiscences?

"On the other hand, God Who created time and Who has fixed our existence at an epoch of time, uses time as one of the principal agents of our sanctification. I know well that His means are not limited and that He Who created nature can easily supersede nature's laws. But I also know that God, like a wise law-giver, or rather, as One Who respects His Own work, does not continually make exceptions to His laws nor does He usually sanctify His predestined by means of miracles.

"Doubtless He often overwhelms them with some prodigy to effect their conversion, but after that He always works by the same system: self-denial. And what would that self-denial be worth which lasted but a few days, or weeks, or months? It takes several years for neglect, desolation, and profound humiliation to do their work, in us. There must be more than a year's novitiate before the soul can say: " Now I have learnt my real worthlessness; the silence which weighs upon me, the humiliation which crushes me are not passing trial: I know that they will stay to the end. "At first, the soul does not think so; it imagines that it is but a passing storm and that it wall soon revive. But when she sees the years roll by bringing no change, when no one ever mentions her, and she is more forgotten and neglected than ever, she realizes that it is no longer a plan designed to humble her but a state in which she will probably spend her life. I give this as an example, but I could have cited many others, such as illness. What abnegation and patience is required when we are ill for years and cannot tell when we shall either recover or die!

"Our Lord Himself proved to us by His hidden life at Nazareth that our heavenly Father requires us to work for years. Jesus might well have left his carpentry and have begun to preach when He was twenty years of age.

"God created us with more nobility than we suppose and shows us astonishing respect; He would lessen our grandeur did He not leave us time to exercise our liberty; He wishes to make friends of us and therefore leaves us time to show our friendship for Him. The friendship of a day, which has undergone no trials, is brittle and we dare not depend on it, but how sweet a thing is an old friendship which has resisted every obstacle; how we trust the old friend of whom we are as sure as of ourselves!"

Meanwhile the Mother Sub-Prioress spent all the time left her by her eight novices in working for her who had led her to Lisieux. A few months after her election, the process of the beatification of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus was brought forward and she was chosen as witness of the holy nun's reputation for sanctity in France and in other countries, and undertook the long work of her deposition. This deposition, which was noticed favourably by the members of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, filled one of six large volumes forming the process.

Before appearing as witness, Mother Isabel spent the last months of 1910 in revising the *Pluie de Roses* which had appeared some years before. She rewrote it almost entirely. Henceforth she undertook this laborious work at the end of every year and it cost her dear. She liked to compose, to write down her thoughts, to give reins to her imagination or to pour out her heart, but this was a work of patience performed simply as a duty. This being so, it was very meritorious of her to undertake by her own wish the third edition of "*La Pluie des Roses*", a volume of 550 pages of close, small print, and also, on her death-bed, weak and feverish as she was, to continue and finish the fourth edition with its striking preface - a larger work than the former edition which she had brought out, and at which she had begun to work during the year 1913.

When she appeared before the tribunal in February, 1911, an epidemic of influenza raged in the community and in spite of her delicate health, the Mother Sub-Prioress was almost the only nun who escaped it.

In the midst of the consequent disorder, anxiety and trouble which reigned for several weeks, her soul was at peace in perfect union with God. Much had passed since the time when little Sister Isabel of the Sacred Heart would willingly have sacrificed everything to prayer, even the duties charity required. As we said, for some years she had understood that divine union is brought about by self-renunciation and conformity of our will with that of Him we love. She had written the year before: "Like little Teresa, I know by what passes in my soul that I shall not be long in this world." On Christmas Day of the same year, after the midnight Mass, we put in her cell this short note from the Infant Jesus, little thinking what deep pleasure it would cause her: "As for you, my dearest bride, you have risen above all systems and theories, and rest on My Heart in the deepest union that can be imagined in this world." These words confirmed her forebodings and filled her with unspeakable joy.

When the influenza was over, as her soul was devoured by the ardent longing for heaven which had never left her since her conversion, she entreated our Lord to take pity on her and at least to give her a sign that she would not live more than two or three years. She wished that our little saint should appear to bring her the message, but Jesus preferred to deliver it Himself.

She had been suffering severely for some days with a violent sore throat, fever, and its accompanying pains. On May 24, the Eve of the Ascension, her exhaustion was so great that she was ordered to go to bed at six o'clock. When we told her that we felt very anxious about her, she reassured us by

saying "You need not be alarmed, Mother; you will find me cured tomorrow morning."

However, next morning brought us a painful surprise; during the night, in the first hour of His feast-day, our Lord, as He rose to heaven, had called His little bride, giving her, as a sign of His summons, such a violent attack of hemorrhage of the lungs that we thought she would die. Another still more serious attack occurred during the night of the twenty-eighth.

With her strong sense of discretion, Mother Isabel would not at first recognize in this anything but the sign she had asked for; she refused to let herself be mastered by the hope of a speedy death, fearing lest she might be mistaken and her mistake might cause her sadness and temptations. But as she saw we were convinced that her end was near, she at length consoled herself with the dream of leaving this world for her true fatherland in the near future.

However, weeks passed by; the rupture had healed, and she had to resign herself to living longer. God preserved her precious life to us for three years more. May He be praised for it!

We no longer imposed "hard lessons" on the "little soul" but confided in her frankly, of which she humbly took full advantage: "I had consented to be weaned from all human love for the love of God", she owned; "and for a time He accepted the sacrifice, letting me taste its bitterness, but when He saw that the immolation was complete and that I did not wish to renounce it in this world, He gave me back more than I had ever dared to hope for, so that I too can say: "I have received all good things since I no longer sought them out of self-love."

When the invalid rose again she was very much tempted to give way to sadness. One day, after she had been complaining a little, she said:

"I have been thinking that my impatience to go to heaven was very ungrateful to God. I have regretted it deeply and have promised to wait peacefully for as long as He likes until He comes to fetch me. But 1 do not say 'Though He should slay me, I will still hope in Him': my heroism consists in saying 'Though He should cure me, I will still hope in Him.' I found comfort in the thought which suddenly occurred to me that I am not kept here to embellish my crown, but to give glory to God and to help the Church."

This rendered her exile less bitter, and she summoned up courage to live amidst privations, for she did not leave her cell during the whole winter except to hear Mass and to receive Holy Communion in the oratory. In February she had a fresh attack of hemorrhage which made us think that the end was near. But her trials were not over, and some months later she was about again and nearly as strong as ever, so that she was able to go to Matins. During the autumn and winter before and the spring following her illness, she accomplished an enormous amount of work. She revised and finished her long poem The little Way of spiritual childhood, consisting of between five and six hundred verses, written for a community festival; another poem of equal length entitled Divine tenderness, a spiritual treatise on the same subject as the first poem, a short account of the foundation of the Carmel of Lisieux, and the life of Mother Genevieve of Saint Teresa, its foundress. Among her other works may be mentioned her Hymn to obtain the beatification of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus, also the short life of that saintly young nun which was translated into twenty other languages and dialects, and which gives a perfect epitome

not only of the life but of the power of intercession of Sister Teresa.

The Italian edition of this pamphlet contains an excellent introduction written entirely by Monsignor della Chiesa, then Archbishop of Bologna, now Pope Benedict XV.

During September of the year 1912, Mother Sub-Prioress was visited by her father, her aunt and family. For their sakes as well as ours she was glad her health was better and tried to rejoice at being able, by degrees, to resume all the duties of religious life.

The community were deceived and thought that this improvement would last, so that, after the elections, at the end of November, greatly to our satisfaction, she was put back into her place as Sub-Prioress, and showed herself more affectionate, attentive, and self-sacrificing than ever.

The nuns were rewarded for their confidence as until the end of September she was able to take part in most of our duties. But on October 2, the hemorrhage returned and she was soon obliged to resign herself to remain in bed where she lay, busy and smiling, working whenever fever or weakness left her strength to hold her pen or pencil, teaching, advising, and consoling her novices whenever she was able to speak. It was then that we fully understood the change wrought in her soul When she came from the world she was wanting in simplicity, undeceived about the world, and almost weary of it, yet, throughout her illness, she was as gay and simple as a child.

For the last five or six years she had shown her love by constantly offering to God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and two years before her death her whole being passed into this sacrifice. On March 7, 1912, the little

victim of merciful Love said: "When the holocaust is offered, it is certainly consumed; henceforth I wish to be a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving."

It was not merely in theory that this grateful soul consecrated itself to praising and thanking all-merciful Love. All she said witnessed to her affection and wonder at the divine goodness. She always placed such a construction upon what appeared the harshness of Providence as to manifest the divine tenderness.

At the end of September, 1911, she wrote:

"I was thinking the other night of the war of which I had been told. It appeared to me for the first time, not as a punishment but as a loving correction meant by God to bring back His children to the right path. He has tried every kind of gentle means, and as these have failed and His children persevere in their wickedness or indifference, the heavenly Father is imitating a doctor who, when every remedy has proved unsuccessful in healing a wound, and all the resources of his art have been exhausted, as the wound begins to fester, has recourse to the knife and to cauterisation.

"The war will be the divine Surgeon's instrument to save the life of the world in its old age, gangrened as it is by impiety and every vice.

"Yes, I do indeed believe that God is always our Saviour; that His actions are always prompted by mercy, even in the most terrible disasters, and that only at the end of the world will His goodness give place to His justice. Although the ruin of Jerusalem seems to me a punishment, it is the figure of the last judgment."

The sole cloud upon her happiness was the thought of the grief her death would cause her father, her two mothers, one in the world, the other in the cloister, the members of her community, and her novices who she knew loved her deeply. But when she learnt that Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus had suffered from the same fear and had asked Saint Joseph to prevent anyone sorrowing at her death, our dear Mother Sub-Prioress made the same prayer confidently and from that time whenever tempted to feel sad, she renewed her act of trust and was happy again.

She was so devoted to our Father, Saint Joseph, that during the last year of her life she consecrated herself to him as fully as to our Lady, the only difference being that she said: "Conduct me to Mary that she may give me her Jesus, so that all may pass from me to thee on its way to her!"

One day she told us how she wished the Church would add his name to the Confiteor, "How I should like to confess to Saint Joseph!" she said. Perhaps some extracts from this true Carmelite's writings on the Holy Family would be appropriate here.

"I have lived for so long in spiritual intimacy with the Holy Family on earth that I shall feel that I have been with them before when I meet them in heaven. I shall talk to our Lady and Saint Joseph about what, in love and imagination, I saw them doing, I shall remind them of our hidden life of faith together; I shall recall the time when we used to long for the coming of Christ in men's souls, and shall rejoice with them in His triumph. How delightful it will be! I feel that I really belong to the Holy Family, not as their servant but as their little adopted daughter, and I know by experience how happy and beloved such a child is when the parents are affectionate and kind. My pleasantest recollections in this life are those of the hours passed in the homes of

Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth. If it has been such unspeakable joy to live with them in faith in earthly exile, what will it be to enjoy their presence face to face!"

She writes, speaking of their life of faith:

"What simplicity there is in the interior lives of Mary and Joseph! Theirs was more a life of faith than ours is. We know all the mysteries and are assured of their fulfillment; the humiliations of Bethlehem or Calvary are effaced for us in the glories of the Resurrection and the Ascension, while Mary and Joseph only witnessed Christ's abasement. Had they not continually kept in mind the mystery of the Incarnation, had they given way to the influences surrounding them, their souls might have become dulled by doubt. What vigilance, what fortitude, their faith required! Joseph must have died before Jesus began His life as the Messiah, so that he lived and died in pure faith. Mary had to wait thirty years before her Son manifested Himself, and after that she witnessed beside His miracles the growing opposition of the Jews; the enthusiasm of some among them contrasted with the unbelief and hatred of the greater number, finally, she saw the crowning wonder of Calvary which seemed to set its seal upon the failure of Christ's mission. How heroic was our Lady's faith! She ought to be called the Queen of believers, for no human being has ever equalled or approached her in the grandeur of her faith. What a joy for us lesser souls, led by the simple, sure way of faith, to see our heavenly Mother tread it first!

O peerless Mother. By the common way
Thou lead'st thy children to eternal day!

"It is to meditation on the holy Family that I owe the love and respect for the poor and for little ones which has taken the place of the aversion, and almost disdain, I felt for them

until I entered Carmel. The lower classes of society seemed to me a race apart from my own. It was not until I lived in the cloister that I truly understood the Evangelical teaching that all men are brothers and equal before God. Before then, I felt a liking for people of refined appearance, and respect and sympathy for them, but the reverse for those who looked poor and ignorant.

"Now it is the very opposite: When I notice an uneducated handwriting among the correspondence I am predisposed to the writer and am prejudiced against good paper and a pretentious style. Now I know that the little ones of this world are much nearer the truth; they have reached it if they love their humble state and do not wish to leave it. It is a great grace to be born destitute of worldly goods and honours which are obstacles to sanctity."

She was humble and devout to the last. Humility was ever on her lips. One day we, gave her an article on Lamartine in a religious magazine. After having read it she said:

"I had no idea that several of Lamartine's works had been put on the index: I did not think he had so separated himself from the teaching of the Church. How thankful I feel that God has preserved me as He has! With the other gifts He has given me, He has always inspired me with a deep horror of pride. From the beginning of my spiritual life I have always asked Him for a humble heart, begging Him rather to deprive me of my wits than to let me sin through pride. But for some time I have dreaded pride no longer because I trust in God: it is He Who protects me from this enemy as He does from all others; 1 have no reason to fear one more than another for He has power against them all."

She discovered hidden and mysterious meanings in the Gospels.

"While reading the Gospels" she writes, "I was struck with our Lord's words: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man sowing his seed;' whether he sleeps or wakes, the seed grows.

"What a striking image of love! For the kingdom of God is the reign of divine love in our heart. When once this love has been put into it by the Holy Ghost it continues to grow even if we feel or see nothing of it, if only we 'abide in love' by good works. It is the development of Saint Augustine's words: 'Love, and do what you will.' Love increases in us even during our sleep; our actions matter little; so long as they are good, love grows uninterruptedly in our heart."

She also delighted in some parts of the Old Testament, as is shown by this fine passage:

"Moses is one of my favourite saints; he must have been among those raised highest in love. What trust he had to practise! He did indeed walk in 'the little way!' His books of Exodus and Numbers helped me immensely by increasing my confidence in God. On reading his beautiful writings I asked myself how it was possible that people should call the Mosaic religion a religion of fear. How loving, tender, and merciful the good God shows Himself towards that ungrateful, rebellious, wicked, and hateful nation. How full of love is Jehovah from Whom, Moses so often obtains pardon for the children of Israel! How kind, how touching, is His unspeakable care for that hard-hearted people; what wonderful miracles He multiplies for their sake, watching over them with a mother's affection and miraculously providing for all their needs! And what intimacy there is between the God, Whom the carnal Jews adore with trembling, and Moses, to whom He speaks 'as a man is wont to speak to his friend.' (Exodus 33:2)

"No one should maintain that in past times God hid His loving Heart. It should rather be said that man was terribly blind, for God has always been the good God: He has never been able to hide His love from us and in all ages has invited souls to the intimacy of this love and striven to reveal Himself to them. No! There has never been a law of fear, it was merely that men were wicked, and if God is better loved now it is solely because the perversity and hardness of the human heart has been forced to yield to the strength of the love which, wearied with centuries of waiting, has cast itself down like a torrent upon the world by means of the Incarnation and the Redemption. Love has triumphed because He willed to triumph and spared nothing to attain His ends. When we read of the marvels of this love depicted in the books of Moses we cannot be surprised at their being crowned by those of the crib and of the cross. It is plain that, even in those distant periods, God could contain Himself no longer - that He was impatient to give Himself still more by giving Himself impetuously to His poor little creatures.

The Spirit of Truth continually taught her soul. She said one day to her infirmarian:

"While making my prayer a short time ago I was thinking that, as clever men like the company of educated people capable of understanding and appreciating their work and value the praise they receive in proportion to its discrimination, so God loves to be surrounded by souls that understand Him, because their praise renders Him greater glory. Therefore He is greatly pleased when we beg Him to reveal Himself to us, so that, knowing Him as well as a creature can know Him, our praise may give Him truer glory."

However, one of her novices has kept these lines written by her: "Intellect and intelligence are not at all necessary to

advance in "the way." The good God makes faithful souls understand the mystery of love."

"I think" she wrote, "that there can be no more secrets of love for God to reveal to me.

"I have but one desire: to love Him as He has loved me, to give Him all He wished to receive from me, and more still. That is possible. The perverse will of His creatures often changes the divine plans, and, in the same way, my devoted will may change these plans and make them more sublime. When I offered myself as a victim of love, was I not asking Him to fill my soul with the floods of affection which He cannot pour into the souls of the damned and the fallen angels? I begged Him then to transpose His graces; is it not a favour of the same kind which I ask of Him now?"

The originality of her mind was often evident both in her words and writings.

Elsewhere she wrote:

"Jesus declared that the calamities of the latter days would be shortened on account of the elect. This is the same as though He had said: 'We planned to punish the human race but We know that the saints will pray and oblige us to modify Our plan." Again, when He stated: 'Heaven and earth will pass away but My words will not pass away.' The meaning of these words to me is hopeful; I shall never forget it. I believe, indeed I feel sure that the confidence of "little souls" will greatly modify the chastisement of the latter days; they will pray and heaven will be disarmed by the daring and trust shown by those dear to the Heart of God. It is so easy to disarm the good God. He is so sorry to punish, so reluctant to be angry! Nothing pleases Him so much as to give Him some excuse to forego His wrath!

O Bliss itself! It costs Thy loving Heart
A pang to make Thy children feel grief's smart!

"I remember what I used to feel for many years when the Parce Domine was sung. To say "Do not be angry with us for ever!" to the good God Who is full of kindness and mercy for ever!" I could not understand the prayer. It is like the Litany of the Sacred Heart: "Heart of Jesus, filled with reproaches, bruised for our sins, Victim of sinners," - and then, when my compassion was deepest for the divine Lamb Who suffered so intensely to redeem us, I heard the astonishing response: "Have mercy on us!" No, Lord! Have mercy on Thyself! Do not allow Thyself to be misunderstood any longer but provide for Thyself a multitude of consolers and friends for Thine outraged Heart! Trouble Thyself no more about us - we are unworthy of it!"

In the following lines humility contends with the most tender and ardent love;

"Last night, I could not sleep until nearly two o'clock in the morning, and I remained in blissful intercourse with God.

"First of all, I meditated on the faults we may commit through ignorance and I thought that perhaps I might be guilty enough to deserve hell and that consequently, but for the divine mercy, I might fear being condemned. Then I realised how inexpressibly God condescends in stooping down to us, as He has to me, whom He has overwhelmed with unspeakable graces, poor, unattractive little soul as it seems to me that I am. I gave a momentary, comprehensive glance over my past life and I saw that what had attracted God to my nothingness was that, nothing as I am, I had been willing to accept His preferred love, and had responded faithfully and trustingly.

"In His adorable humility, He had asked but one thing of His creature. He had merely asked it to be willing to receive His gifts, His graces, His Love! If the creature does not show contempt for these divine advances, it is overwhelmed by them. What a monstrous thing it is that a nonentity, such as we all are, should show disdain for the offer of friendship made to it by the Almighty! yet this disdain is found in most hearts and the good God is so destitute of souls that will receive His graces, that, in His joy at meeting with one, He is beside Himself and squanders His love.

How could such a soul die, except with absolute trust and self-abandonment regarding its heavenly Father?

However, her trust and self-abandonment were founded solely on the divine mercy; she said:

"To reckon on one's own works, even were they heroic, would be like a stupid countryman who put a farthing into the King's hands with the idea of enriching him and the expectation of profuse thanks and a rich reward. All our good works are like this farthing and worth even less."

Like Sister Teresa she concluded:

"My hands are empty and I am glad of it, for, if they were full of my own virtues I should be afraid of losing them on the journey or of having them stolen by the devil."

The following lines might have been dictated by Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus:

"I often renew the sacrifice of myself I understand why self-abandonment so appeals to God. What He loves in it is not the generosity of a soul which gives itself up beforehand to the suffering it knows may be in store for it and which yields itself willingly to any kind of anguish or martyrdom. No! It is

not that which delights and touches the divine Heart! It is the fact that a weak little creature which feels and knows its own weakness - that a creature beset by fears on every side, should have such faith in the love and goodness, the tenderness and kindness of our heavenly Father as to throw itself blindly into His arms, exclaiming: 'I trust in Thee; I have not strength to endure anything but I am certain Thou wilt not tempt me above my strength; I trust that Thou wilt bear me in Thine arms lest my foot stumble against a stone and that, when death shall have brought me into Thy presence, Who art my eternal happiness, I shall wonder at the means by which Thou hast ensured my everlasting bliss."

Further on, we read:

"I feel no doubt that directly I die I shall be in the possession of the good God. I shall be surprised, in heaven, at what I learn about His power and beauty, but I do not think I shall have any more to learn about His tenderness and His love."

She expresses the same sentiments in this prayer:

"O my God! I trust firmly in Thy mercy that if I were to die at this very instant Thou would st take me straight to Paradise. It is on Thy loving kindness alone that I rely for the expiation of all my faults."

We, in our turn, firmly trust that the divine loving-kindness will not deceive the bold confidence of this great soul.

Before speaking of her holy death, we must say a few words of her joy on the 9th of June, the day of the introduction of the cause of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus. When, at five o'clock in the afternoon, wo received the news we had been anxiously expecting since midday, Sister Isabel of the

Sacred Heart could not restrain her tears; her hand trembled as she held the telegram which she read again and again:

Papa pronuncio placet introduzione Suor Teresa.

"How grand everything is that comes from the Church," she exclaimed.

She implored us to devote three days to rejoicing and to keep them in a special manner, although they were to be private. She herself composed some songs for the occasion and, after having devoted herself ungrudgingly to obtain this first victory, she looked upon it as her duty to express our grateful joy Lo God in every possible way.

We shared her feelings, and on June 19, 20, and 21, the whole convent was hung with garlands of leaves and roses, escutcheons, and scrolls inscribed with thanksgivings or quotations from the words of the servant of God, preparations for illuminations, etc.

His Lordship Monseigneur Lemonnier, our Bishop, Monseigneur de Teil, and all the reverend members of the ecclesiastical tribunal honoured us with a visit on the first day to admire our decorations and rejoice with us. In the community-room the novices, as our representatives, sang some verses of thanks composed by their mistress and recited with great feeling the whole poem of "The little Way." Monseigneur added a kind word about our dear Sub-Prioress who was absent.

Holy Communion was taken to her each day through our flower-wreathed cloisters; two postulants in white dresses threw blossoms before the Blessed Sacrament and the invalid's bed was strewn with roses.

This reminded her of a dream she had had two years before in which she saw a coffin carried by novices and two postulants robed in white pass through our cloisters, garlanded with flowers and foliage. She was struck by the coincidence, which made her think her death was very near.

This was in fact the case. Towards the beginning of March, Mother Sub-Prioress was in a very weak state, owing to her violent perspiration, fever, and hemorrhage. As the latter became more serious through the frequency of the attacks and the fever ran very high, it was thought wise to administer the last Sacraments to her on Friday, July 11. Her sufferings, hitherto not very severe, soon became much more acute. Repeated attacks of hemorrhage caused the most painful sense of suffocation, accompanied by a burning thirst which never left her until she died. Edema of the chest supervened, accompanied with terrible spasms of the heart, and, patient and peaceful as she had always been in the past, she begged us now with tears to pray for her.

We made her inhale oxygen, but its effects lasted but a very short time, and powerless as we were to soothe her anguish we were almost relieved when, on the eve of her death, her devoted doctor told us that probably she would not live through the night.

She was greatly consoled during that day, July 29, on receiving, through the Reverend Father Rodriguez, postulator of our Cause, a few lines from our Holy Father, Pope Pius X, giving us his blessing "in the humble expectation that the Most High would make known His will concerning the servant of God, Teresa of the Child Jesus."

Our dear daughter seized the precious autograph and kissed it fervently.

In the evening, when the community assembled round her bed, she remembered that she had not been able to beg pardon of her sisters, as her condition had necessitated absolute silence. She now performed that act of humility in the most lowly and touching manner, thanking us affectionately for "the extreme care that had been taken of her, and for the kindness with which we had borne with a poor invalid Sub-Prioress."

The calm and peaceful evening was followed by a very restless night, and she suffered severely at intervals during the whole of the next day.

Her Saintly Death

"I entreat Thee to let Thy divine eyes rest upon a vast number of Little Souls, I entreat Thee to choose, in this world, a legion of Little Victims of Thy Love." - *Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus*

Towards evening, the community assembled in Mother Isabel's cell to pray for her as they had the day before, and the night of her last hours drew on. Towards morning on Friday, July 31, at about three o' clock, her symptoms made us summon the nuns hurriedly. How she edified us! It would take too long to recount all the touching words she said and we should find it difficult to describe our feelings as we stood beside the "little child," as indeed she seemed to be - a frank and gracious child about to cast itself into the arms of its Father without any anxiety or the slightest fear of His judgments, for "little children do not lose their souls."

"I am in a very good state to die in," she said, smiling, at about six o'clock in the morning: "I am going to die! I am going to see the good God! Oh! What a solemn moment!"

We asked her whether she would like to see our extraordinary confessor, as our chaplain was absent, but she answered simply that she felt no need for it. She had been to confession two days before and had received the Holy Viaticum from our Father Superior.

Her agony continued for some time; she seemed to suffer severely and at last she sighed -and said: "What a long while it lasts! What shall I do?" Then after a short silence she turned to us and said: "I have been thinking about priests," meaning that she had been offering her sufferings for them.

Then she asked, when she would be happy? On our answering: "In a few minutes," her face became radiant and she exclaimed: "Oh! Is it true, Mother! Then I will do nothing but make acts of love." And, taking up her crucifix she kissed it, holding it firmly in her hands. "My God, I Love Thee!" she repeated: "I long for Jesus! Jesus! Come quickly!"

After a pause, she exclaimed: "How I love the Blessed Virgin, too! Saint Joseph, too! Little Teresa, too! and all the Saints who had a special love for God, too!" She put a peculiar and tender emphasis upon the word "too" which cannot be described. What expression there was in her voice as she said:

"Mother, remind me of the graces that God has poured upon me! tell me what singular love He has shown me." She repeated "singular." "Recount what He has done for His poor little creatures. Oh! How I love Him, I wish to die blessing Him." Her face wore a beautiful expression that was new to it. There was something poetic in the dignity of the moment, like a note of heavenly music.

The eyes of the dying saint looked through the open window opposite and seemed to penetrate the secrets of the heavens. She could see the rising sun gilding the dome of our chapel. We never recall that look without thinking of the lines from Divine Love:

The sun-rise brightens and new light
Has swiftly caused the day to shine;
Time flies and I have reached Love's noon
And looked on Thee, O Sun divine!
Now, lightened by Thy purest rays
Mine eyes within Thy Heart can gaze.

The bell rang for the conventual Mass and some of the sisters regretfully went away, leaving the gentle victim of " love and thanksgiving," whose sacrifice seemed nearly consummated.

Just before the Sanctus bell she closed her eyes and spoke no more. The infirmarian, who had often noticed how absorbed the invalid appeared between the two elevations at Mass, begged our little saint in a whisper to pray that at that instant of her last Mass the dying nun might depart. Her prayer was granted: at the moment the first bell sounded her gasping but regular breathing suddenly became slower and at the second ringing, at the elevation of the chalice, she died quietly.

Her age was thirty-two years and six months, of which she had spent ten years, six months, and eighteen days in Carmel.

Next day when she lay exposed before the choir grille surrounded with flowers where her father came to weep and pray for a long while - we learnt that war was imminent.

One of the wreaths of white flowers fastened by a tri-colour ribbon lying at the foot of the coffin bore this inscription:

"The chaplains and soldiers of the *Oeuvres militaires Catholiques* of Normandy."

"May Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus and Mother Isabel of the Sacred Heart obtain for us grace to do our duty generously as servants of Christ and France!"

We felt sure that France might count that day upon a powerful intercessor, another advocate in heaven!

She had written: "Now I repeat, in my turn: I am restrained now, my victories will come after death: I will rain down light and fire: I will form a trio with Teresa and Marie-Ange and will help them until the end of the world to make Love beloved."

Again she wrote:

"I shall soon see our dear saint for the first time and shall learn from Jesus all that she has done for me. I suspect that it is to her I owe my conversion and all the graces that followed it, including those of knowing her, loving her, wishing to imitate her and to enter her Carmel, of following in her footsteps, and soon, I hope, of dying absorbed in love as she died. There is no doubt that 1 am one of the souls she has most dearly loved and cared for, yet I have never had the childlike feeling towards her usual with those she specially protects; I consider myself as her little Sister, and I believe she has chosen me to help her in her mission of making God loved in an entirely new manner.

"A long while ago, after the death of Mother Marie-Ange, when I heard of our little seraphim's prophecy about the "little souls" who would fulfill her mission by glorifying her "way", I thought that I should be one of those souls, and that with Teresa and Marie-Ange, I should form a little trinity which would always act together and for the same object: that I should share their happiness and glory, and should attract hearts to the "little way" by revealing to them the divine loving-kindness."

A few days after her death, one of our sisters was much struck by seeing after Matins an immense star, or rather a sun, over our Carmel, sheltering beneath it two smaller but equally brilliant stars with which it formed a triangle as it shed its rays over that part of the convent in which Mother Isabel had died.

The sister's cell was lighted for a quarter of an hour by the symbolic meteor and although she knew nothing of the hues quoted above, she burst into tears as she thought to herself: "It is our little saint with Mother Isabel and Mother Marie-Ange!"

In one of her poems, Mother Isabel had made Sister Teresa say:

And I, as sun, shall bring forth other orbs,
Thus, born from me, still other saints shall shine
Within the vault of heaven.

It has been a consolation to receive many precious tributes in favour of our dear daughter, especially the following lines from the Archbishop of X-----, who after having made a pilgrimage to our Carmel kept up a special intercourse of mutual prayer with his "dear spiritual sister", Isabel of the Sacred Heart.

"By a touching favour" writes His Grace, the two saints, Teresa of the Child Jesus and "Isabel of the Sacred Heart rarely leave me. I invoke them several times a day and feel that they are near me. I shall have two graves to visit now when I am able to go to Lisieux."

Monseigneur Lemonnier wished that the principal members of the ecclesiastical tribunal residing at Bayeux should be present at the funeral. Our venerated and devoted Postulator, Monseigneur de Teil, would also have been there, but they were all unavoidably prevented. However, the ceremony was affecting in its simplicity. After the Mass celebrated by our Father-Superior and the absolutions pronounced by the canons of Lisieux, the open coffin was borne through the cloisters by our two postulants and the novitiate. It was the fulfillment of the mysterious dream

before-mentioned, for though the cloisters were not actually garlanded with flowers, the festivities seemed to have been but of yesterday.

Since that day, Monday, August 3, the body of Mother Isabel of the Sacred Heart has lain in the cemetery of Lisieux between Teresa of the Child Jesus and Mother Marie-Ange. We feel full confidence in the heavenly "Trio".

- From our convent of the Carmelites of Lisieux, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Conception of our Lady.

- Sister Agnes of Jesus, Prioress

About This EBook

The text of these files is taken from the book Mother Isabel of the Sacred Heart. The book is described as "A copy of the circular letter sent to Carmelite convents on the death of Mother Isabel of the Sacred Heart, Carmelite nun of Lisieux, 1882-1914, in an authorised translation from the French, with an introduction by Dom Benedict Weld-Blundell, O.S.B.", and is signed by Sister Agnes of Jesus, Prioress of the Carmel. The edition used was printed in London, England in 1916.

It has the Imprimatur of Father Edmund Surmont, Vicar-General, Archdiocese of Westminster, England, 17 July 1916.

The cover image is a photograph of Mother Isabel, and is taken from the book.

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